



Connecticut Criminal Defense Lawyers Association

P.O. Box 1766

Waterbury, Connecticut 06721

CCDLA.org

March 22, 2019

Senator Gary Winfield, Co-Chair
Representative Steven Stafstrom, Co-Chair
Judiciary Committee
State Capitol
Hartford, CT 06106

TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF RAISED BILL 1085 -
An Act Concerning The Legalization Of The Retail Sale And Possession Of Cannabis And
Concerning Erasure Of Criminal Records In The Case Of Convictions Based On The
Possession Of A Small Amount Of Cannabis

Dear Senator Winfield, Representative Stafstrom and Honorable Committee Members:

The CCDLA is a not-for-profit organization of approximately three hundred lawyers who are dedicated to defending persons accused of criminal offenses. Founded in 1988, the CCDLA is the only statewide criminal defense lawyers' organization in Connecticut. An affiliate of the National Association of Criminal Defense Lawyers, the CCDLA works to improve the criminal justice system by insuring that the individual rights guaranteed by the Connecticut and United States constitutions are applied fairly and equally and that those rights are not diminished.

The CCDLA **supports** Raised Bill 1085, *An Act Concerning The Legalization Of The Retail Sale And Possession Of Cannabis And Concerning Erasure Of Criminal Records In The Case Of Convictions Based On The Possession Of A Small Amount Of Cannabis*, because:

1. This Bill would prevent many adults from being unfairly penalized in the criminal justice system for possession of small amounts of cannabis. This Bill could help reduce aggressive and unjust enforcement of cannabis laws against African Americans and other minorities, and help rebuild communities that are most devastated by the war on drugs. (See the work of the Drug Policy Alliance at www.drugpolicy.org).
2. Research has shown that there is a racial bias in the enforcement of marijuana possession laws in Connecticut. The arrest rate for blacks is significantly higher than the arrest rate for whites, despite a higher use rate among whites. (See *Racial Disparities In Connecticut Marijuana Arrest* by Jon Gettman, Ph.D., commissioned by Aaron J. Romano, Esq.)

3. Adults who are arrested for even a small amount of cannabis suffer collateral consequences that can last for years, if not a lifetime. Therefore, erasure of past convictions for up to 1.5 ounces of cannabis should be automatic as it could help improve the economic health of minority communities. Adults who are hampered by a conviction for cannabis possession have limited opportunities for employment, may be ineligible for financial aid to attend college or vocational trade school, and be denied public housing. (See the work of the Sentencing Project at www.sentencingproject.org).

For these reasons, the CCDLA asks this committee to act favorably on this bill. We do recognize the position of some that the bill does not go far enough but we will support the bill as it will have a positive Criminal Justice effect.

Respectfully submitted,
Jasette Ann-Marie Henry, Esq.
Executive Board Member, CCDLA